

short, and so closely pressed against the integument of the seed, that it is difficult to distinguish them: the seeds of this species, however, were all obtained from one specimen, and may not have been thoroughly ripe.

In the plant for which Mr. Woods proposes the name of *S. megastachya* (and which is in all probability a species of *Arthrocnemum*), a native of the South of Europe, the structure of the seeds is extremely different. The testa is hard, black, and crustaceous, quite destitute of hairs, and covered with concentric rows of little tubercles. The albumen is very evident, and principally confined to the straighter side of the seed, the convex side being occupied by the embryo, which is cylindrical and but slightly curved; the thick, fleshy cotyledons, taken together, are about equal in diameter to the radicle, which seems to be nearly continuous with them in direction, not bent sharply round upon them as in *S. herbacea*, and probably in all the true *Salicornias*.

BOTANICAL SOCIETY OF EDINBURGH.

May 15, 1851.—Professor Balfour, President, in the Chair.

The following papers were read:—

1. "Biographical Notice of the late Mr. George Don." By Dr. Neill.

2. "List of Plants found in Peebleshire." By George S. Blackie. Of the plants included in this list the following may be mentioned:—*Vicia Orobus*, Manor-head; *Galium pusillum*; *Pyrola rotundifolia*; *Primula farinosa*; *Betula nana*; *Sibbaldia procumbens*, Manor-head; *Saxifraga stellaris*; *Arctostaphylos Uva-ursi*; *Hymenophyllum tunbridgense*, and *H. Wilsoni*.

3. "Notice of *Exidia hispidula*, Berk., used in China as a remedy in disease, and also as an article of diet." By Dr. Dill. Dr. Dill remarks:—"The fungus was first brought to my notice in Hong Kong as a favourite remedy of the Chinese in attacks of dysentery. It is used by them in the form of decoction, boiled along with dried plums, the latter being added merely to give flavour, &c. to the decoction. The first time I ever saw it used was in the case of the person who told me of its efficacy in the before-mentioned malady. This man, an English gardener, was suffering from a severe attack of dysentery, and as his house was a most unhealthy one, I strongly advised his going into hospital. He said, before doing so he would like to try a Chinese medicine, which had been strongly recommended to him by an old Chinaman, a friend of his. I said, 'Take care what you do with yourself, for your case won't do to be trifled with.' Three days after this I was surprised to find him at his work, and well again. 'Sir,' he said, 'this medicine has had such a wonderful effect upon me, that I have kept some of it to show you.' The specimen he then gave me I handed to my Chinese servant, who seemed perfectly familiar with it, and speedily obtained me a large supply. I then determined to try it in the first case that came before me. A few days afterwards a sailor applied to me having chronic dysentery,

which had been going on for eighteen months. I immediately gave him a strong decoction of the fungus, which he took in 2-oz. doses, three times a day; and in eight or ten days he seemed quite cured. Being then permitted to go out, he got drunk, was exposed to night air, &c., and had a return of his malady. Again, however, the same medicine was employed with the same favourable result, and he joined his ship in the enjoyment of recruited health. These two cases made me very sanguine of the value of the fungus as a cure in diarrhœa and dysentery, but future experience by no means realized the hopes I entertained respecting it. Since then I have so often found it fail completely, that I now regard it as being inferior in efficacy to many of the remedial agents we already possess. Mr. A. H. Balfour has also tried it successfully at Hong Kong, but I think his experience has been similar to my own. It grows on old, dead trees and rotten timber; hence, and from its shape, the name by which it is designated in China—'Mok-yii,' the ear of a tree. The fungus itself is much prized by them as an article of food on account of its mucilaginous properties. They eat it in soups, stews, &c., and consider it a great dainty. In taste it is very insipid, but certainly not more so than the far-famed bird's nest."

Dr. Douglas Maclagan exhibited specimens of the plant brought from Penang by Mr. W. D. Maclagan. In that country it is called Sweekiang, and is used for food.

4. "On Poisoning with Indian species of *Datura*." By Dr. Herbert Giraud, Professor of Chemistry and Materia Medica in Grant Medical College, Bombay. Dr. Giraud brought this subject before the Medical and Physical Society of Bombay, and the observations forming the present paper were communicated to the Botanical Society by Dr. Balfour. The very numerous cases of poisoning by *Datura* that have of late occurred in Bombay, have afforded opportunities for observing the action of a poison, of which but a scanty record is to be found in the standard works on Materia Medica and Toxicology. Several species of the genus *Datura* are indigenous throughout India; and "*Datura alba*" (*D. metel*, Roxb. Flora, i. 561) and "*Datura fastuosa*" (Roxb. Flora, i. 561) are found growing in gardens and amongst rubbish, about villages, all over the country. The intoxicating properties of these plants appear to have been known amongst Eastern nations from time immemorial, and they have long been employed in India, China (where *D. ferox* is used), and the islands of the Eastern Archipelago to facilitate the commission of theft and other crimes; for which nefarious purposes the *Datura Stramonium* appears, of late years, to have been in some few instances employed in France and Germany. Here the cases of poisoning by the species of *Datura* are so frequent, that the natives usually recognise them by their characteristic symptoms. It is remarkable, that although administered under many different circumstances, and with varied motives, it should so seldom prove fatal here, that not a single case, in which the effects of *Datura* could be distinctly traced, has terminated fatally; and of fifty-one cases that were treated in the Bombay Hospital during the past year, only four

presented alarming symptoms. Notwithstanding the recent prevalence of *Datura*-poisoning, it has been only on the presumptive evidence of its characteristic symptoms that its action has been inferred. The poison is administered so stealthily, and the natives are so backward in aiding the cause of justice, that it is next to impossible to obtain positive evidence of the administration of the poison, or to trace it to the culprit; although, from their familiarity with its nature and with the modes of its administration, it is evident that many of the lower orders of the people are acquainted with the adepts who employ it. These remarks, however, apply, with equal truth, to cases of poisoning by such substances as arsenic and corrosive sublimate, the presence of which may be determined by the surer methods of chemical analysis. From the information Dr. Giraud has been able to collect from natives, it would appear that the seeds are the parts of the plant usually administered. They are powdered and thrown into rice, bajree, and other grains; or mixed up with cakes and sweetmeats. Sometimes, however, an infusion or decoction of the leaves is prepared and introduced into the vessels in which food is being cooked; but of the usual quantities of the seeds employed, or of the strength of the infusion and decoction, Dr. Giraud has had no means of judging. Of the cause that has produced so sudden and remarkable an increase in the use of this poison, it is difficult to form any conjecture. Viewing the most prevalent motive to *Datura*-poisoning, it would seem as if some regularly organized band of thieves had, within the last year, invaded our island. From 1837 and 1838, when a few cases of poisoning supposed to be from *Datura* were noticed by Drs. Bell and M'Lennan, in the annual reports of the Native General Hospital, up to 1848, only from six to ten such cases have been annually recorded; but during the past year, fifty-one cases have come under hospital treatment.

In a note received by Dr. Cleghorn from the Superintendent of Thuggee in Mysore, it was stated, that the seeds of *Datura alba* were employed by thieves and other rogues to narcotise their victims, and deprive them of the power of resistance.

5. "Report on the State of Vegetation in the Edinburgh Botanic Garden." By Mr. M'Nab.

A note was read from Mr. Babington, stating that *Ranunculus trichophyllus*, mentioned by Mr. Syme as found near Edinburgh, is a very common form of *R. aquatilis*.

It was stated by Dr. Mitchell, that the plant called by Dr. Howitt *Cenanthe pimpinelloides*, and for which he gives several stations in his 'Flora of Nottingham,' is *C. Lachenalii*. It is very abundant in the blue lias districts. All the Leicestershire stations for *C. pimpinelloides* are those of *C. Lachenalii*, the former species not being found either in Leicestershire or Nottinghamshire. These facts render it probable that *C. Lachenalii* is not so "rare in fresh water," as it is said to be both in Babington's 'Manual,' and in the last edition of Hooker's 'Flora'; the mistake has doubtless arisen from the roots not having been examined. Specimens of the plant were sent by Dr. Mitchell.

Mr. M'Nab exhibited several sections of oak-stems found in the course of excavations made at Tanfield, Canonmills, and read the following notice supplied by Mr. M'Caul, who had superintended the operations:—"In the course of excavating a pit for a new gasometer nine years ago, a number of oak-stems, the largest 2 feet in diameter, were found. In the pit now excavating, and from 80 to 90 feet from the one alluded to, two fine trees were found. The position they occupied was about 10 feet below the original surface, beneath the lowest bed of gravel, and immediately over the boulder clay, their direction being nearly east and west. Three of the pieces were lying horizontally, and two of them had a rise towards the east at an angle of 10° . At the western or lower part of these stems, roots in connection with them could be traced; but they mouldered away to the touch."

A specimen of yellow-flowered *Hibiscus*, raised by Mr. Isaac Anderson from seeds sent from China by Colonel Eyre, was exhibited. The plant was about 2 feet high and had a woody stem. The leaves are hairy, the petals sulphur-yellow, the flower when expanded being 3 to 4 inches across. The epicalyx consists of eight to ten linear sepals, while the calyx consists of two sepals united and thrown to one side.

A specimen of *Hyoscyamus* raised from seeds communicated to Mr. Moore of the Chelsea Botanic Garden by Major Madden, was exhibited. The plant grows in the Himalaya, and resembles *H. albus* in some respects. In the open border it attains the height of 2 feet. It has ovate leaves and terminal cymes. The flowers are of a dingy yellow, and the calyx is covered with glandular pubescence. Dr. Douglas Maclagan tried the effect of the plant on the eye. A single drop of the fresh juice caused dilatation of the pupil in twenty minutes, and the dilatation with slight double vision continued for twenty-four hours.

MISCELLANEOUS.

HOLOSTOMUM CUTICOLA. Pl. V. figs. 3 & 4.

Norwich, June 10th, 1851.

To the Editors of the Annals of Natural History.

GENTLEMEN,—Should you consider the following notice worthy of insertion in the 'Annals,' you will oblige me by its publication.

I remain, Gentlemen, your very obedient servant,

ROBERT WIGHAM.

Specimens of the Bream and Roach have long been observed in the rivers of this part of the country to be frequently covered with black spots, and have been generally considered, when in this condition, to be in a diseased state. I have lately examined these spots with the microscope, and find them to consist of a collection of minute black granules of a branched radiating structure and of a confervoid appearance, and which form the outer coat of cysts containing a transparent membranous cyst in which I found an ani-